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EVALUATING THE NATIONAL GUARD
DOMESTIC OPERATIONS FORCE STRUCTURE

By

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Table of Contents

	Page
Disclaimer.....	ii
Table of Contents	iii
List of Figures	v
Abstract	vi
INTRODUCTION	1
Overview of the Study	2
The Nature of the Problem.....	2
Purpose of the Study	3
The Research Question	3
Definition of Terms.....	4
Research Methodology.....	5
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
CBRN Response Enterprise Perspectives.....	6
On-Going DoD Budget Concerns	6
Examining CRE Size and Scope	7
GAO Review and Findings	8
Observations from the Field	9
CRE Force Mixture and Response	9
NG CBRN RESPONSE ENTERPRISE STRUCTURE	10
NG CERFP Force Structure	11
NG HRF Force Structure.....	12
CRE Regional Alignment	14
FACTORS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM.....	15
Budgets and Funding Levels	15
Increased Mission Responsibilities	16
Training Opportunities	17
Regional Alignment	18
ANALYSIS.....	20
Four Focus Areas	20
HRF and CERFP Validation Process.....	21
Training Trends and Observations.....	22

Budgets and Funding Levels	25
Mission Responsibilities	27
Regional Alignment of Forces	28
Analysis Summary	30
 CONCLUSION	30
 RECOMMENDATIONS	32
Increase Funding and Task Organize CASE	32
Re-Align Capabilities within FEMA Regions.....	33
Level Funding for HRFs and CERFPs	34
 Endnotes	35
Bibliography.....	38

List of Figures

Figure 1. CBRN Response Force Enterprise Structure (T32 and T10 forces).....	10.
Figure 2. NG CERFP Organization	11.
Figure 3. CRE Force Structure Transition FY11 to FY12.....	13.
Figure 4. NG HRF Organization.....	14.
Figure 5. HRF and CERFP states within FEMA Regions	15.
Figure 6. Joint Integrated Evaluation Team Composition and Reporting	21.
Figure 7. Validated HRFs and CERFPs 2013 - 2015	23.
Figure 8. Performance Observations 2015.....	24.
Figure 9. Performance Observations 2016.....	25.

Abstract

Between 2003 and 2012, the force structure and mission responsibilities of the National Guard (NG) Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFP) and the Homeland Response Forces (HRF) have experienced significant changes. These changes are evident in their manpower, equipment, training and overall mission requirements. However, an analysis and the effects of these changes have not been fully explored to understand the impacts on the HRFs and CERFPs. An analysis is necessary to ensure these forces remain fully capable of responding to a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) event or any natural or manmade disasters in the US homeland. This research paper asks the question, “Are the HRF and CERFP forces properly structured, trained, and aligned among the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions to respond to disasters?”

An Evaluation method is used in this research paper to examine the original HRF and CERFP implementation concepts, training performance observations, results from training exercises, and the overall alignment of these forces across the nation. Evaluating these areas will yield information critical for senior Department of Defense (DoD) and program decision makers on the current and future construct of the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Response Enterprise (CRE). This information is important, because it will ensure limited resources are tailored to meet mission responsibilities and the forces are strategically aligned to respond to incidents in the US homeland.

INTRODUCTION

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 presented the Department of Defense (DoD) with the stark reality that the current homeland defense posture was insufficient to meet emerging threats to the U.S homeland. Gaps between local, state and federal response capabilities became evident as these entities struggled to effectively perform an integrated response and recover from the attacks. Since that time, the NG has played an increasingly important role as an operational force by performing operations abroad, and in the homeland.

The events of that day forced the Federal Government and DoD to act quickly and implement major organizational changes.¹ In response to the identified gaps between local, state and federal agencies, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) ordered the DoD to develop a homeland response capability that could deter and respond to natural or manmade disasters in the US homeland. In addition, a key goal was to provide forces capable of supporting local authorities to recover from disasters, mitigate suffering and return an area to normal as quickly as possible. The DoD response was the creation of numerous 57 NG Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Teams (WMD-CST), 17 NG Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Force Enhanced Response Force Packages (CERFP), 10 NG Homeland Response Forces (HRF), a Defense CBRN Response Force (DCRF) and Command & Control CBRN Response Elements (Alpha & Bravo). These capabilities are strategically aligned across the nation supporting all ten FEMA regions, and collectively, they comprise the CBRN Response Enterprise (CRE). This CRE is a mixture of both Title 10 active duty forces and Title 32 National Guard forces.

Elements of this concept and structure are nearly a decade old, and an evaluation of the force structure is necessary to determine if the current model still meets the SecDef's directives and initiatives. Evolving mission requirements, decreases in DoD budgets, manpower increases

and additional training requirements have all affected the original force structure concept. In addition, both the HRF and CERFP forces are larger than originally planned for and potential adjustments in their force structure, training and regional alignment may be necessary to ensure these forces remain fully capable of responding to disasters in the homeland.

Overview of the Study

This research study will use an Evaluation framework coupled with a mixed methods approach to analyze the current force structure focusing specifically on the NG HRFs and CERFPs. Quantitative and qualitative data will be blended together to identify trends and gaps in manpower, training, mission roles and force alignment. Since the NG HRFs and CERFPs are considered a joint mission, both the Army National Guard (ARNG) and Air National Guard (ANG) will benefit from a current understanding of the issues affecting these forces. Prior research papers along with information gathered from journals, articles, personal interviews and Government Accountability Reports (GAO) will be the main sources of information used in this paper. This research will ultimately produce recommendations that will improve the current HRF and CERFP training, task organization, and regional force alignment.

The Nature of the Problem

To date, no detailed evaluation has been conducted of the NG forces to determine if the current CERFP and HRF force structure is properly designed, and aligned, to meet its evolving homeland defense mission requirements. However, there are constant debates on how the United States should respond to an actual employment of a chemical hazard or weapon.² An evaluation is necessary to analyze the current NG HRF and CERFP force structure, training, task organization and responsibilities to ensure these forces remain capable of responding when called upon. Since 2003, the CERFP has increased in manpower from 186 personnel to 203

personnel. This increase is due to the addition of an 11 person Fatality Search and Recovery Team (FSRT) and a 6 person communications team known as the Joint Interoperability Site Communications Capability (JISCC). In addition, the HRF has increased from 566 personnel to 589 personnel, also due to the addition of the FSRT and JISCC teams.³ Adding to these complexities is the notion that the CERFP and HRF mission construct within the larger CRE is not sufficiently structured to operate as necessary in a real world response. The Casualty Assistance Support Element (CASE) is currently aligned with the HRF leaving the CERFP with no organic security assets. Previous research has been focused on the CRE response within the National Response Framework (NRF) as a whole, but limited evaluations have been conducted on the NG components within the CRE.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to conduct research on the NG CERFP and HRF forces that will yield information for senior leader decision makers involved in the CRE as it relates to the current, and future, construct of the HRF and CERFP forces. Focusing on the methods in which CBRN forces are structured, how they respond, how they train, and how they mitigate suffering in the homeland during a catastrophic Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) event will help “right size” the force, leverage limited resources, and ensure the most effective domestic response force is available to the American people.

Research Question

The research question at the forefront of this paper asks, “Are the HRF and CERFP forces properly structured, trained, and aligned among the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regions to respond to disasters?” The answer to this question is broad depending on the views and perspectives of the participating interagency entities; NGB,

USNORTHCOM or USARNORTH. Regardless, in times of increased fiscal restraint and reduced force levels, the DoD should consider the overall size and scope of this enterprise. To properly resize the enterprise, a realistic assessment of the CBRN risk to the Homeland must be considered.⁴ Each of these entities has a role to fulfill in supporting Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA). In addition, field personnel have their own views as to how the HRFs and CERFPs can be “right sized” to more effectively train and perform the mission. This research paper will attempt to yield tangible results, and provide recommendations and potential courses of action to ensure these forces remain ready to respond.

Definition of Terms

1. Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear Enhanced Response Force Package: These capabilities are commonly known within the National Guard as CERFP. Each CERFP is comprised of a 203 person team consisting of both Army and Air National Guard personnel who are specially trained to provide rapid life-saving capabilities during a manmade or naturally caused all-hazards incident in the homeland. The capabilities inherent within this team include Command and Control (C2), Search and Extraction (S&E), Decontamination (DECON), Medical (Med), Fatality Search and Recovery Teams (FSRT) and Joint Interoperability Site Communications Capability (JISCC). There are 17 standalone CERFP teams across the nation, with at least one in each FEMA region. These forces are under the control of state Governor, unless federally activated.

2. Homeland Response Force: Commonly known in the National Guard as HRFs, these capabilities consist of 583 personnel from the both the Army and Air National Guard and are capable of managing multiple CERFP units during domestic incidents. The HRFs each contain a 180 person Command and Control (C2) section and a 200 person Casualty Assistance Support

Element (CASE). In addition, each HRF has a CERFP life-saving element associated with its organizational structure. There is one HRF in each FEMA region and these forces are also under the control of the state Governors, unless federally activated.

Research Methodology

This research paper will use an Evaluation method with a mixed methods approach to analyze the current NG HRF and CERFP force structure. The focus of the research will specifically be on the NG HRFs and CERFPs, not on the T10 CRE forces. The primary goal is to determine if the current NG manning, training, task organization and regional force alignment structure meets the Secretary of Defense's (SecDef) homeland response directives, and if NG forces are properly aligned across the nation. This will be achieved by evaluating recent training results and trends from collective training events/evaluations, current task organizations and overall force alignments across the nation.

Since the HRF and CERFP units have rarely been deployed for real world operations, limited data is available to analyze how effectively or ineffectively they performed. However, these units are required to participate in frequent local and regional collective exercises with interagency partners which has yielded an abundant amount of information available in the form of Training Proficiency Assessments (TPA) and Mission Training Proficiency Evaluations (TPE). The quantitative data from these TPAs/TPEs will be analyzed to identify trends in training, manpower and mission effectiveness. Qualitative data will also be used from after action reports and general field observations. These observations will be evaluated and possibly fill the gaps that quantitative data could not yield. The results will produce an analysis of the current manning, training and general design concepts of these forces. The ability to effectively analyze NG force structures and properly align those forces will have a significant impact on

future resource decisions, training requirements, equipment sourcing, manpower considerations, senior leader decision-making, and DoD budgetary decisions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

CBRN Response Enterprise Perspectives

There is on-going debate among military professionals and senior level civilian leadership about the proper size and structure of military CRE forces. Specifically, the NG HRFs and CERFPs, because these forces have been steadily evolving since their initial stand up in the early 2000s. Information is readily available defining the initial implementation plan (IMPLAN) for these forces, however, these forces have grown in size and mission complexities but no current research has answered the question; “Are these current forces structured to meet evolving mission requirements?” It is important to note that “the construct of the CRE relies heavily on the National Guard”⁵ thus making an evaluation of the current force structure even more imperative. The heavy reliance on NG forces is a direct result of the 2010 QDR which restructured the nation’s CBRN response forces, ultimately placing more responsibility onto the NG to provide a more regionally aligned, and more rapid response force for incidents that occur in the homeland.

On-going DoD Budget Concerns

Emerging national security threats, directives from the SecDef, and DoD budgetary realities continue to be prominent factors affecting the composition and structure of the NG HRF and CERFP forces. “Right sizing” and aligning limited resources for these forces to remain a viable component of the domestic response capabilities in the homeland is an issue that must be continually reviewed. The seriousness of decreasing the DoD budget is evident in a letter that

Congressman J. Randy Forbes (R-VA) wrote to Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel in February 2014. In the letter, Congressman Forbes suggests that despite the shortfalls of the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), and our defense planning process, it requires the DoD to define sufficient force structure and force modernization plans to successfully execute the full range of military mission. Congressman Forbes states in his letter that despite the changing shape of threats the United States has faced over the last two decades, each of the military services has continued to receive a relatively static level of budget resources.⁶ Budgetary constraints trickle down through the military services and eventually affect the units supporting CBRN missions – HRFs and CERFPs.

Budgetary concerns coupled with changes in manpower and mission responsibilities has resulted in certain HRF and CERFP elements having to seek funding from other programs as a “bridge” solution until proper funding sources are secured. For example, the JISCC element was required to become an additional element in the HRFs and CERFPs. However, no service funding was in place for those assigned JISCC personnel to participate in training and exercises. Additional funding from other programs was resourced to ensure the JISCC personnel attained the necessary level of training proficiency. This is further evidence that changes in the force structure have been directed, but such decisions require proper analysis.

Examining CRE Size and Scope

COL Anthony DiGiacomo developed a research paper at the US Army War College in 2013, arguing that the current CBRN Response Enterprise (CRE) is too expansive and costly to maintain during times of fiscal constraint and the military members involved in the Enterprise are generally unavailable to the Services for overseas deployments.⁷ The primary focus of his study was on fiscal issues plaguing the nation and he links CRE force size with uncertain, and

diminishing, DoD budgets. He is correct that the military personnel assigned to the CRE mission are often unavailable to support the overseas warfighter mission, but his argument does not make the homeland defense mission any less important. The Services essentially deferred the homeland mission over to the NG when USNORTHCOM was established, because the Services did not want to lose their warfighter mission and fund a domestic response mission.⁸ This decision left USNORTHCOM without any assigned forces to fill their responsibility to conduct a domestic CBRN response. However, the military must sustain a pool of capable personnel trained to perform homeland defense missions such as the CRE, because one of the constitutional responsibilities of the President is to protect the US.

GAO Review and Findings

Civilian leadership and senior level decision makers also have a vested interest in ensuring the NG HRFs and CERFPs remain adequately structured, funded, aligned and trained to support homeland defense missions. A US Government Accountability Office (GAO) report in December 2011 indicated that additional steps can, and should be implemented, to enhance the effectiveness of the National Guard's (NG) life-saving response forces.⁹ Specifically, that CERFPs face personnel, training and equipment challenges that have adversely affected their preparedness to execute their mission. The timing of this report was appropriate, because it was created just before the Homeland Response Forces (HRF) became fully operational capable (FOC) in 2012 offering insight toward future challenges for the HRFs. This report provides a scope of the existing problems within the CERFP life-saving forces, and it also contains data indicating changes that have occurred since the initial stand up of these forces.

Observations from the Field

In addition to reviews by civilian leaders, field personnel familiar with the operational aspects of the HRFs and CERFPs indicate that the force structure can be more effectively structured to meet real world operational realities. CPT David Reynolds, a Subject Matter Expert (SME) assigned to the Joint Interagency Training and Education Center (JITEC), WV conducts specialized training for NG forces involved with the HRF and CERFP missions. His white paper argues that deficiencies in training and operational alignment of certain elements of the HRFs and CERFPs should be realigned. Specifically, he notes that the Casualty Assistance Support Element (CASE) is task organized with the HRF, not the CERFP.¹⁰ His recommendation is to realign a portion of the CASE element from the HRF to the CERFP. This realignment would yield greater training results, improve life-saving capacity, and increase operational effectiveness. He supports the concept of his argument with examples from exercises where the CASE was aligned under the CERFP, and had numerous benefits to the life-saving capacity of those teams. His argument is reinforced by numerous field training exercises where personnel also recommended the entire CASE element, or a portion of it, to be aligned with the CERFPs.

CRE Force Mixture and Response

In a strategy research paper developed by COL Steele while at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA he focused on what the right mixture of forces looks like within the homeland, and the roles of the military forces involved in domestic operations. His focus is on funding, training, equipping, force size and defining the capabilities necessary for the force to quickly move into an incident site. COL Steele's research defines the force structure of the CBRN Response Enterprise (CRE) in 2010, and he offers courses of action to consider when

11 However, his research is primarily focused on the large scale T10 national response versus the National Guard (NG) response level. The criteria he used for T10 forces also can be applied to NG response forces, because they too have certain requirements for response times, training, equipment, and force structure.

The majority of literature available for this research topic is focused on the active duty T10 portion of the CRE. Limited research has been conducted on what can be done to more effectively structure and align the existing NG HRF and CERFP forces. While recommendations for changes have been conveyed from field personnel, these changes have not been codified into the current force structure.

NG CBRN RESPONSE ENTERPRISE (CRE) STRUCTURE

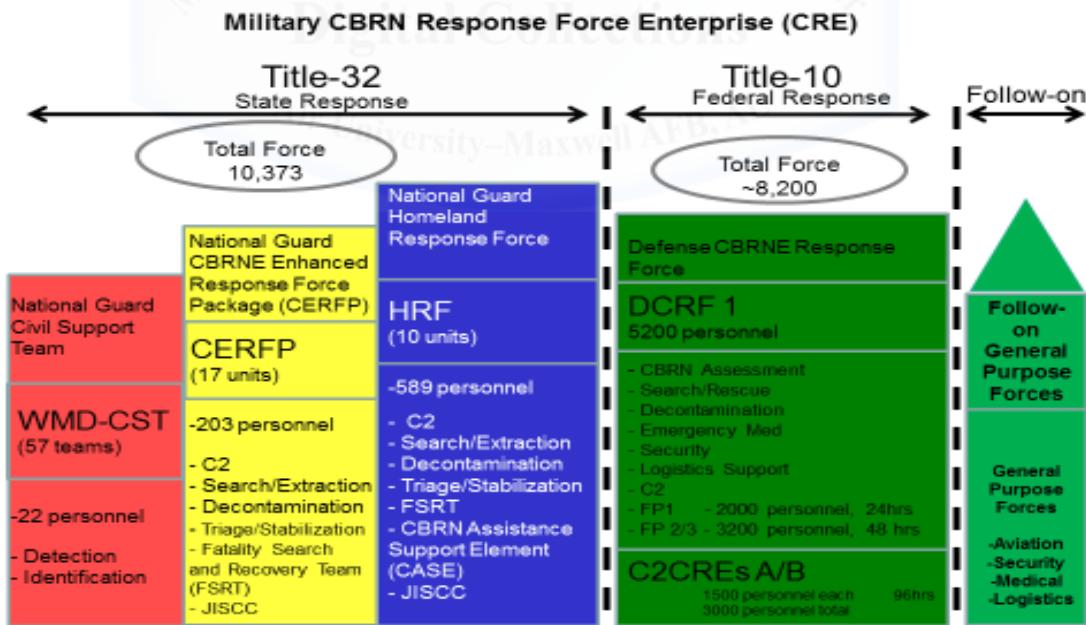


Figure 1. CBRN Response Enterprise (T32 and T10 forces).¹²

NG CERFP Force Structure

The Joint Requirements Oversight Council Memorandum 162-06, released on 17 August 2006, was the statute that authorized the creation of the initial twelve NG CERFPs. Further mention of this Memorandum throughout this paper will be referred to as JROCM 162-06. This Memorandum requested the Army, Air Force and the National Guard Bureau (NGB) program and budget for twelve CERFPs beginning in 2008 and across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP). The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) in 2006 further authorized an additional five CERFPs increasing the total number of NG CERFPs to seventeen where it remains today.

The CERFP is composed of traditional NG personnel and units that are task-organized to provide specialized CBRN consequence management capabilities in support of local, state, and federal authorities. These forces receive additional special training and equipment to plan and conduct casualty search and extraction; emergency medical triage, treatment, and patient stabilization; mass casualty decontamination; and fatality search and recovery operations in support of the incident command system. These tasks are in addition to the primary Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC), and proficiency is maintained in both areas.¹³

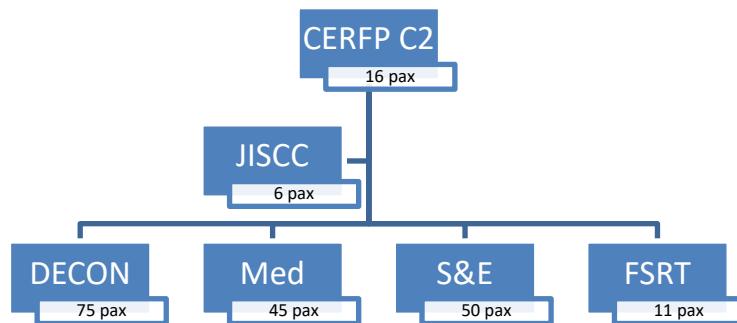


Figure 2. NG CERFP Organization.

The NG CERFP is under control of the state Governors, unless federally activated, and these forces contain the largest portion of the NG's life-saving capability. They are prepared to deploy within 6 hours of a notification and are comprised of 203 personnel supporting a wide array of life-saving capabilities. All 17 CERFP units were validated by their respective state Adjutants Generals in 2011. These units follow a modular deployment concept, either deploying together in their entirety, or only certain elements within the CERFP that can be deployed individually. For example, if only search and extraction element is requested for an incident then the S&E team can deploy as a single element. The CERFP can be tailored for specific mission requirements and may operate under the JFHQ-state, JTF-state, or a response force assigned to a federal response organization (10 USC status).

NG HRF Force Structure

The 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) identified additional shortfalls and response gaps within the DoD, and more specifically, within the nation's consequence management response capabilities. Figure 1 details the current HRF structure and position within the overall CBRN Enterprise. Some of the issues identified during the 2010 QDR included deployment times that did not maximize life-saving capabilities, and lack of cohesion between dispersed supporting units.¹⁴ The 2010 QDR resulted in SecDef's decision of Resource Management Directive 700 (RMD 700) which restructured the CBRN response forces and revised the DoD's operational concept for CBRN responses. This decision addressed the response shortfalls and gaps by authorizing the creation of ten NG HRFs. Figure 4 shows the transition from the FY11 CRE structure to the FY12 CRE structure that met the SecDef's force restructuring directive.

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CBRN Response Enterprise Transition

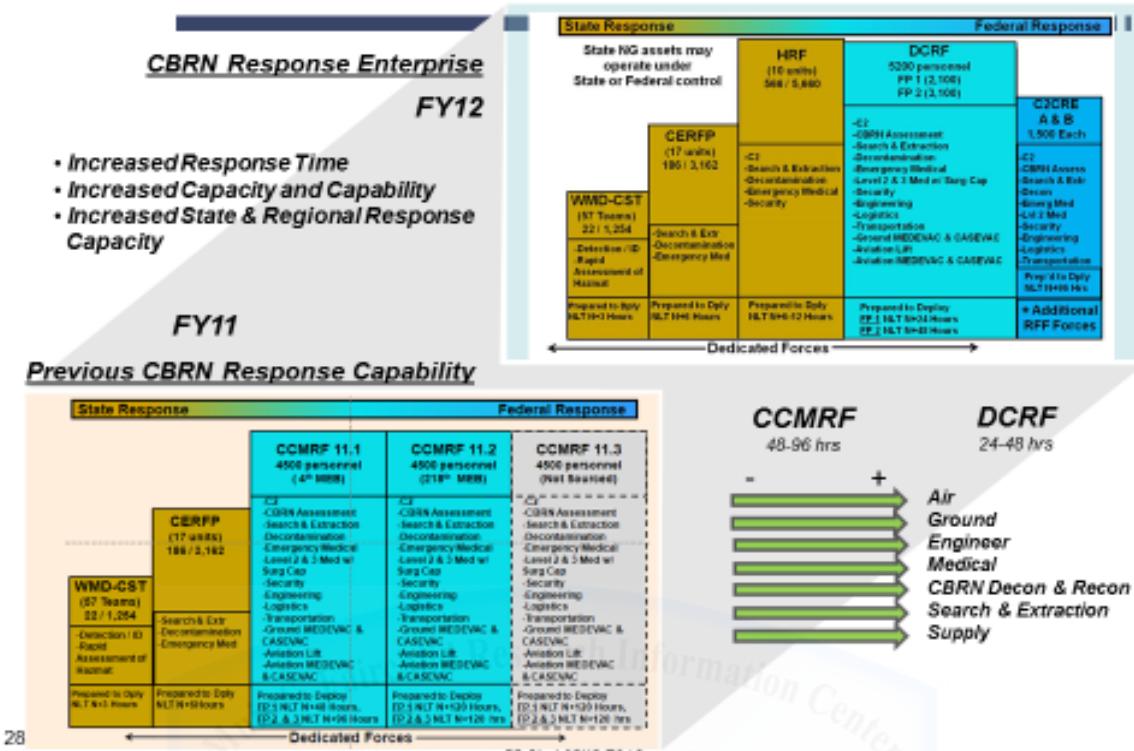


Figure 3. CRE Force Structure Transition¹⁵

Once all 10 HRFs had been validated by their respective state TAGs in September 2012, they were considered a fully operational capable (FOC) component of the overall CRE. On 9 October 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta sent a Memorandum to the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the CJCS, Undersecretaries of Defense, USNORTHCOM, USPACOM, USTRANSCOM and NGB indicating the full operational capability of the DoD Domestic CBRN Response Enterprise.¹⁶

Similar to the CERFP construct, the HRF is composed of traditional National Guard Soldiers as a part of the CBRN task force that conducts CBRN consequence management response in support of civil authorities to save lives, mitigate human suffering, and maintain public confidence to alleviate CBRN incident effects. The HRFs can also be tailored for specific

mission requirements and may operate under the JFHQ-state, JTF-state, or a response force assigned to a federal (10 USC status) JTF.¹⁷

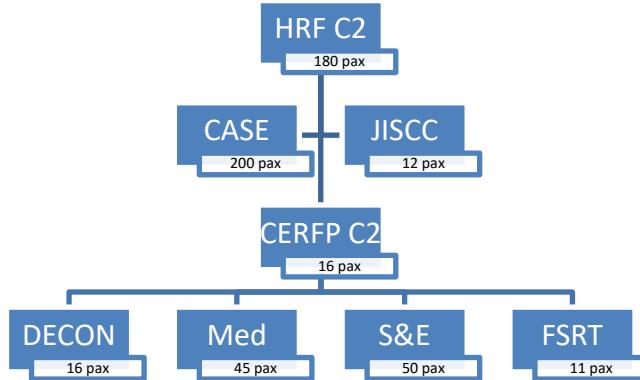


Figure 4. NG HRF Organization.

CRE Regional Alignment

Elements of the CRE are regionally aligned across the nation to provide the fastest response times when an incident occurs. The overarching concept is to reach the maximum number of affected US populations in the shortest amount of time, thereby providing the nation with a rapid life-saving capability. Each HRF and CERFP is aligned to be no farther than a day and half by ground transportation to anywhere in the nation, and they also can be airlifted into an affected region adding additional flexibility for force movement. Figure 5 (HRF and CERFP states within FEMA Regions) depicts the current geographic force alignment across the nation. The states denoted with a red dot are states that had a CERFP mission then expanded to assume a HRF mission with greater regional responsibility. Ongoing domestic missions such as those being conducted on the southwest border indicate a strong NG focus in the region and perhaps consideration for realigning an existing CERFP to that geographical region.



Figure 5. HRF and CERFP states within FEMA Regions.¹⁸

FACTORS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

Budgets and Funding Levels

Numerous factors directly impact the overall force structure, training, equipment and alignment of the NG HRFs and CERFPs. A 2013 Homeland Response Force study indicates that “all parties involved in response, especially local responders, have faced unprecedented cuts in funding due to the state of the U.S. economy over the past five years. This budget reduction has led to changes in force posture, and in many cases, changes in response assets and capabilities.”¹⁹ Since the primary responsibility of the NG HRFs and CERFPs is to support local responders, such changes ultimately affect how these forces support domestic incidents.

Another funding and budgetary factor bearing on the NG HRFs and CERFPs is evident within their current organization as a joint force capability. The fact that these forces are considered a joint capability makes them inherently reliant upon the Services, Army and Air Force, to fund the mission. By DoD standards, there is no “joint” funding, only funding

allocated through the Services (Army and Air Force) to sustain these missions. Therefore, the entire capability is dependent on the degree of existing service funding. In 2015, the overall Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) program, which funds the NG HRFs and CERFPs, endured approximately a 22% funding cut.²⁰ While this funding cut did not disrupt the entire program these actions caused the NG-J3/7 Directorate to explore alternative solutions to mitigate the funding cuts and manage the sustainability of the program.

Increased Mission Responsibilities

The CBRN response enterprise has never been fully deployed for a domestic incident, and the question arises if this enterprise provides the most effective response model.²¹ The current NG HRF and CERFP force structures are larger in both terms of manpower and equipment than the original implementation concepts. The CERFPs have experienced approximately a 10% increase in overall manpower from 186 pax up to 203 pax and the HRFs also have experienced a similar increase in personnel, from 566 to 589 personnel. The increase of personnel is a direct result of the additions of an 11 person Air National Guard (ANG) Fatality Search and Recovery Team (FSRT) and a 12 person Air National Guard Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC). The addition of these two elements expanded the capabilities of the HRFs and CERFPs to provide fatality search and recovery and communications support between all response elements.

Increases in manpower and the additional equipment sustainment levied by the addition of FSRTs and JISCCs has led to increased program management responsibilities consisting of planning, training and funding efforts. It should be noted that these recently added force elements are funded, manned and equipped by the Air Force.

Training Opportunities

Maintaining a well-trained force of HRF and CERFP personnel has presented leadership with certain challenges since the inception of the CRE mission. The National Guard CERFPs have “faced specific challenges that could adversely affect their preparedness to effectively execute the CBRN mission.”²² Specifically, NG and CERFP officials have cited ongoing difficulties in maintaining adequate numbers of personnel with the proficiency needed to execute many specialized tasks they are to perform, and stated that additional equipment may be needed to perform the mission.²³ Factors affecting training opportunities include limited opportunities for all elements to train collectively, competing demands between the homeland mission and the OCONUS warfighter mission, and limited training opportunities on key deployment tasks.²⁴

Joint collective training opportunities between all elements of the CRE remains an essential component to sustaining the readiness of the forces. Joint training is defined by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as “Training, including mission rehearsals of individuals, staffs, and units, using joint doctrine or tactics, techniques, and procedures, to prepare joint forces or joint staffs to respond to strategic, operational, or tactical requirements considered necessary by the Combatant Commanders (CCDR) to execute their assigned or anticipated missions.”²⁵ Since the NG HRFs and CERFPs are considered a joint mission, the directives in the Chairman’s instruction are applicable to these forces.

The NG HRF and CERFP Concept of Operations (CONOPS) further elaborates on the requirement of these forces to participate in collective training during phase-0 which is considered the training and readiness phase.²⁶ However, the current alignment and training concept between HRF and CERFP forces is not designed to fully leverage collective training opportunities to always train together as they would operate during a real world response. Army

Techniques Publication 3-11.47 and Air Force Tactics, techniques and Procedures 3-2.79

indicate that “if the HRF C2 element and CERFP are not collocated, the priority of effort is to support the CERFP.”²⁷ The CASE element can conduct split operations, but the priority of effort is to assist and provide security for CERFP elements.²⁸ This differs from current collective training practices.

For example, the Casualty Assistance Support Element (CASE) is task organized with the HRF and not the life-saving elements of the CERFP. This alignment does not always permit the CASE element to train with the life-saving elements of the CERFP forces. Like the C2 element of the HRF, the CASE element is only funded for 7 days of collective training per year. The CERFP elements are funded for 14 days per year. Therefore, the CASE generally trains with only the HRF, thus losing valuable training opportunities with other elements.

Regional Alignment

The regional alignment of the HRFs and CERFPs is designed in a manner so the forces can reach a vast majority of the US population within a day and a half, or sooner. The current force alignment within the FEMA regions should be more balanced to provide greater response capacity and training among the forces. Re-balancing the forces would not detract from their ability to reach the majority of the US populace. For example, FEMA region-V has six states within it, and all but one state contains CRE forces. This region alone contains one HRF (Ohio) with a CERFP TF, and four other CERFP units located among Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois and Indiana. However, there is only one CASE element available to support the HRF and the five CERFPs (including the OH CERP TF). The CERFP units in this area would have to schedule combined annual training exercises during the fiscal year or only train with a small portion of the CASE element to participate in collective training with a CASE element. This

results in limited training opportunities for those CERFP units in the region to train with the entire CASE element, or portions of it.

In contrast, FEMA Region-X has only one HRF (Washington) and one CERFP unit (Oregon). These states border each other and it allows the OR CERFP unit to schedule and focus on collective training with the WA HRF unit. Since 2011, the WA HRF and the OR CERFP have participated in numerous joint collective training exercises including the Vigilant Guard regional response exercise. Vigilant Guard exercises are sponsored by United States Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) in conjunction with the National Guard Bureau (NGB). JROCM 263-06 established the Vigilant Guard Joint Regional Exercise Program (VG) as a USNORTHCOM sponsored program executed in conjunction with NGB. Vigilant Guard provides opportunities for JFHQ-State and associated operational units, state emergency management agencies, NGB, Title 10 forces and federal responders to improve coordination, operational relationships, plans, and processes in preparation for future emergencies and catastrophic events.²⁹

The regional alignment of the HRF and CERFP units directly impacts their ability to exercise with regional and interagency partners to improve response capacity for all-hazards events. As noted in a 2011 GAO report, CERFPs coordinate with some of their potential response partners such as local and state organizations through activities such as briefings, but have achieved varying levels of success in educating partners about their capabilities because of insufficient guidance on how to conduct interagency coordination.³⁰ When units are too geographically dispersed it affects their ability to gain synergy with each other. Too many forces, or too few of them in a region also impacts their ability to garner joint collective training opportunities with regional partners.

In summary, the culmination of these factors continue to affect the HRF and CERFP force structure to varying degrees. To address these issues, ongoing evaluations supported by NGB in conjunction with other interagency stakeholders will at least acknowledge, and potentially address the issues. These efforts will also ensure the findings of the 2011 GAO report are addressed.

ANALYSIS

Four Focus Areas

There are many areas of the NG HRF and CERFP mission sets that can be analyzed to gain a greater understanding of specific issues affecting these forces. As noted in a 2011 GAO report, issues affecting the CERFP force preparedness consisted of challenges in training, maintaining qualified personnel, and the lack of a process to comprehensively review and validate personnel and training.³¹ For the purpose of this research paper, the analysis focused on four specific areas to be considered in future force decision making processes that will ensure these forces remain fully ready to respond to real world missions, both state and federal. These four focus areas include trends and performance observations from training evaluations, budgets and funding levels, mission responsibilities, and overall regional alignment of the forces. These areas were selected because they are significant factors affecting the response capacity of NG forces. To link these areas together a general understanding of how these forces are validated and the interagency partners involved in the training and decision making processes can provide some general background.

HRF and CERFP Validation Process

The readiness and response capacity of CRE forces is essential to ensuring NG forces are able to fulfill their homeland response missions. Each HRF and CERFP is required to undergo an external evaluation by an organization from outside of their command within three years of their last evaluation, or sooner, if they experience significant changes in their manpower or mission responsibilities that affect their readiness to respond to real world incidents.³² For example, if a CERFP unit experiences an entire turnover of their Search and Extraction team then the unit would be required to participate in an external evaluation to assess their ability to collectively perform operations in a realistic CBRN environment. The assessment and validation process is a joint endeavor conducted by a team of CRE subject matter experts (military and civilian contractors) from NGB, USNORTHCOM and ARNORTH. This team is collectively known as the Joint Integrated Evaluation Team (JIET). Figure 7 depicts the JIET manning structure and the chain of reviews necessary for a HRF or CERFP to be validated. This Figure is representative of the recommended team composition and can change depending on the size and scope of the exercise or event.

	CERFP Evaluation	HRF Evaluation
Team Composition	NGB – Lead (13 pax) USARNORTH/USARPAC (7 pax)	NGB – Lead (28 pax) USARNORTH (11 pax)
TPE Signed By:	NGB – Lead USARNORTH/USARPAC – Dep Lead	NGB – Lead USARNORTH – Dep Lead
TPA Signed Out By:	Commanding General USARNORTH	Commanding General USARORTH
MTA Validated By:	TAG	TAG

Figure 6. Joint Integrated Evaluation Team Composition & Reporting.

The JIET uses a set of authorized training and evaluation outlines to assess the ability of the HRF and CERFP units to deploy and employ their skills during an incident. Upon completion of the external evaluation, the JIET completes a Training Proficiency Evaluation (TPE) to NGB and the Commanding General USARNORTH for review and signatures. Once signed, the TPE becomes a Training Proficiency Assessment (TPA) that is forwarded to Commander USNORTHCOM and Chief, National Guard Bureau for situational awareness. The assessment package also is sent to the Adjutant General (TAG) of the state for Mission Training Assessment validation. The respective TAG has final authority on whether or not to validate the unit(s) based on the JIET's findings. In almost every case, the TAG has agreed with the evaluation results and validated his or her respective HRF or CERFP unit.

Training Trends and Observations

Analyzing the results of recent training events and exercises provided a set of data depicting specific trends as well as gaps in HRF and CERFP training. This data confirms previous GAO findings indicating training challenges are still evident among the CERFPs. All training events and exercises follow a standard process called the Joint Exercise Life Cycle (JELC) that consists of four phases including requirements, planning, execution and assessment. This process ensures that units train only to their mission requirements and is followed by a thorough end process of assessments that identifies training gaps, thus driving future training plans.

Information was gathered and compiled from training data collected by the Joint Interagency Training and Education Center (JITEC) located in West Virginia. Members from JITEC are also part of the JIET and act as the execution arm for the NGB in all training aspects related to the HRFs and CERFPs. The results from external evaluations between 2015 and 2016

were analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses within the current HRF and CERFP training programs. Figure 8 indicates the trained and validated status of the HRFs and CERFPs from 2013 to 2015.

	FY13	FY14	FY15	Validated (Y/N)
HRF	OH, CA			Yes (all)
CERFP	WV, HI, VA, NE, IL, AL, CO			Yes (all)
HRF		GA, TX, NY/NJ, WA, PA		Yes (all)
CERFP		FL, IN, MN, NV, PR, OR		Yes (all)
HRF			MA, UT, MO, OH	Yes (all)
CERFP			ME/NH/RI, KY, LA, VA, WI, WV	Yes (all)

Figure 7. Validated HRFs and CERFPs 2013 – 2015.

While all units were deemed to be operational and validated by their respective TAGs, further analysis indicates specific training areas within the elements can be improved. The collected data focused on training improvements versus training strengths. It should be noted that all units between 2013 and 2015 were validated, but training improvements were noted during those validations, as well as in 2016. Figure 8. below provides additional details on the specific areas of that training. The training improvements were evident in both HRFs and CERFPs, most notably in the life-saving elements of the CERFPs.

Each year the JITEC conducts an analysis of the most salient training deficiencies and makes recommendations to NGB on ways to improve the delivery of training programs. This analysis not only mitigates training deficiencies, but it also helps to apply limited resources to those areas requiring the most attention. Figure 8. identifies the training performance areas most noted during the 2015 external evaluations. The data is based on the percentage of Go (trained) versus No-Go (needs training) noted during external evaluations in 2015.³³

2015 Performance Observations	Total ExEvals	Go	Go %	No-Go	No-Go %
HRF Command Post					
Manage Information & Data (HRF-CP-04)	8	3	31% (avg)	5	69% (avg)
Provide Logistics Support (HRF-CP-08)	8	2	25%	6	75%
CASE					
Support Tactical Operations (ART 5.2.1)	9	7	78%	2	22%
CERFP Command Post					
Conduct Mission Ops in a CBRN Environment (TA 7.1)	13	6	46%	7	54%
Search & Extraction					
Conduct S&E Recon Operations (ART 6.9.4.1.2)	13	10	77%	3	23%
Mass Casualty Decontamination					
Conduct Ambulatory Decontamination (ART 6.9.4.2.2)	14	9	64%	5	36%
Medical					
Prepare for Treatment of CBRNE Casualties (ART 6.9.4.2.1)	14	11	79%	3	21%
Fatality Search & Recovery Team					
Prepare for Recovery of CBRNE Casualties (ART 6.9.4.2.3)	14	11	79%	3	21%

Figure 8. Performance Observations 2015.³⁴

The HRF Command Post had the highest percentage of No-Go's per element, and it should be noted that it also has the highest number of personnel assigned, 200 personnel. This analysis was unable to draw a correlation between the amount of personnel assigned per element and the high number of No-Go's for that element. However, there appears to be some correlation between this data that warrants further analysis in the future. In addition to the quantitative data collected during evaluations, field personnel and observers, controllers, trainers (OC/T) also have recommended increasing the number of training days that the CASE can collectively train with a CERFP.

Performance observations gathered during external evaluations in 2016 point to similar training deficiencies as those noted in the 2015 data. Although similar training deficiencies

existed in 2016, an overall improvement was noted by a decrease in the amount of No-Gos observed during these evaluations. This is perhaps a positive indicator that units are applying lessons learned, best practices and training strategies learned from previous years.

2016 Performance Observations	Total ExEvals	Go	Go %	No-Go	No-Go %
HRF Command Post					
Manage Information & Data (HRF-CP-04)	9	3.75	31% (avg)	5.25	59% (avg)
Provide Logistics Support (HRF-CP-08)	9	2	22%	7	78%
CASE					
Support Tactical Operations (ART 5.2.1)	9	7	56% (avg)	2	44% (avg)
CERFP Command Post					
Conduct Mission Ops in a CBRN Environment (TA 7.1)	13	6	46%	7	54%
Search & Extraction					
Conduct S&E Recon Operations (ART 6.9.4.1.2)	13	10	75%	3	25%
Mass Casualty Decontamination					
Conduct Ambulatory Decontamination (ART 6.9.4.2.2)	14	9	79%	5	21%
Medical					
Prepare for Treatment of CBRNE Casualties (ART 6.9.4.2.1)	13	10	77%	3	23%
Fatality Search & Recovery Team					
Prepare for Recovery of CBRNE Casualties (ART 6.9.4.2.3)	14	11	79%	3	21%

Figure 9. Performance Observations 2016.³⁵

Budgets and Funding Levels

The number of training days that are programmed and budgeted for the HRF and CERFP elements are different, and this disparity creates disconnects during the exercise planning phases. The HRF's C2, CASE and JISCC elements are funded for seven days per year.³⁶ However, all of the elements of each CERFP team are funded for fourteen days per year.³⁷ For those states that have a HRF mission this often leaves a gap among training opportunities between the HRF

and the CERFP, because the HRFs generally participate in a week long collective training event and the CERFPs generally participate in two separate week long events. The CERFPs are required to participate in two separate collective training exercises each year³⁸ and they generally plan each collective exercise for one week in duration. This allows the CERFP to commit one week of training with the HRF elements and then seek other training venues to train either collectively, or with interagency partners.

The disparity in training days that are funded for these forces is due to the requisite skill sets required for personnel assigned to each of the elements; S&E, Decon, and Medical. These elements require a high degree of technical expertise that if not routinely practiced, can diminish over time. Since the CERFPs are the life-saving components of these forces they inherently require assigned personnel to sustain a unique set of perishable and technical skills. However, the funding obligated for each soldier or Airman assigned to each element of a CERFP remains the same. Although, data from training events indicates that certain training topics such as ropes, shoring, and hauling procedures for the Search and Extraction team could use additional training days to sustain their perishable skill sets, the funding levels for training days remain equal among the elements.

HRF units are generally funded for 83 fulltime equivalents (FTE) to staff each HRF. All of these 83 funded positions are US Army soldiers, and some HRF states have included US Air Force personnel within their HRFs which are funded directly from the respective state. This equates to approximately 830 full time staff on call everyday across the nation supporting the HRFs. While these 830 personnel are funded directly from NGB, no specific job description with definitive responsibilities has been defined for the positions. The original implementation plan (IMPLAN) for the HRFs and CERFPs in 2010 outlined specific roles and responsibilities of

the fulltime equivalents, including what percentage of those personnel were to be training support for the HRFs and CERFPs, but the HRFs have deviated from the original manpower plan and the FTEs are not necessarily being used as intended. Therefore, the HRF and CERFP units have had to rely on a prolonged period of support from outside organizations to provide ongoing sustainment training to the forces. However, this was never the intention, and has become the de-facto long-term solution. The CRE mission, including the HRF and CERFP program, are not immune to shrinking DoD budgets and the FTEs must assume their roles as both trainers of the NG CRE forces and responders when activated.

Mission Responsibilities

Since the initial stand up of the HRF and CERFP units changes have occurred in their overall manpower. Specifically, these forces are larger today than they were originally intended. This increase in manpower is a direct result of an expansion of the capabilities that the HRFs and CERFPs can provide to local, state and federal authorities during a disaster in the US homeland. The primary increase in manpower and expansion of responsibilities is attributed to the additions of the FSRT and JISCC teams. While these elements are not considered life-saving capabilities they are nevertheless important to the NG CRE missions.

The FSRT and JISCC teams are both comprised solely of Air National Guard personnel and equipment. As these teams became part of the overall HRF and CERFP force structure between 2009 and 2012 the teams lacked sufficient funding and resourcing these forces was lacking. These elements were tasked with participating in joint collective training with the other HRF and CERFP elements, as well as being on call should they be activated. However, sufficient funding was not dedicated to pay for their required 14 training days. Most FSRT personnel were not able to participate in fourteen days of training with the other CERFP

elements, but data indicates that all FSRT teams performed rather well during external evaluations. Minor training deficiencies were noted, but those deficiencies did not detract from their ability to support the overall mission.

The JISCC teams experienced similar issues as did the FSRT teams. They also were required to assume parts of the NG HRF and CERFP mission, yet lacked sufficient funding sources to ensure they were able to participate in all required training events. Since the JISCCs are USAF assets they rely on funding through the USAF. However, when the teams were required to assume the mission the USAF had not programmed to fund this additional mission responsibility which ultimately made the teams reliant on existing CBRN program funds. In both cases of the FSRT and the JISCC team mission requirements, the proper method to ensure funding and resource availability was backward. Requirements should be identified, funding and resources then secured, followed by mission assumption. Like the FSRT teams, data indicates that the JISCC teams experienced minor training deficiencies during external evaluations, but they are able to support the overall NG CBRN mission.

Regional Alignment of Forces

The CRE forces are intentionally aligned across the nation to reach the maximum number of citizens as rapidly as possible. Figure 5 shows the national alignment of HRF and CERFP forces and how they are aligned within each FEMA region. The last time this regional force alignment was thoroughly examined was during the initial stand up of these forces in 2006 (CERFP) and 2012 (HRF). Since that time, numerous regional exercises, joint collective training events and limited real world deployments have occurred that have provided insight into the actual force employments, as well as considerations about the geographical force alignment.

When analyzing the CRE force alignment within each region it is noted that three of the HRFs share a border, Ohio HRF in Region-V, Pennsylvania HRF in Region-III, and NY/NJ in Region-II. This places three of the larger command and control portions of the NG CRE forces right next to each other. In addition, the number of CERFPs these HRFs have in their region also differs. The Region-V HRF (Ohio) is responsible for four other CERFPs (MN, WI, IN and IL). The Region –III HRF (Pennsylvania) is responsible for two other CERFPs (VA, WV) and the Region-II HRF (NY/NJ) is responsible for one other CERFP (PR).

The differences in CERFP force responsibilities among the HRFs in each region also affects collective training opportunities for the forces. For example, the Region-V HRF is only funded for seven days each fiscal year, and if every CERFP in the region wanted to train with that HRF there would not be enough funding for the HRF to do a full collective exercise each year with all of the CERFPs. This disparity ultimately results in some CERFP units not being able to participate in a full joint collective training exercise some years with their regional HRF.

The alignment of the NG CRE forces also indicates that no CBRN response forces are located along a majority of the US southwest border. A 2015 GAO report indicated that “it is critical that DoD coordinate and synchronize its civil support mission to engage a broad range of interagency partners it may need to support, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Customs and Border Protection.”³⁹ This geographical region of the nation has long been a national security concern due to its porous border, and history of illegal immigration and drug trafficking. It also could be a pipeline for terrorist activities attempting to transit a weapon of mass destruction into US homeland. Two major US cities are located in Arizona; Phoenix with a population of 1.5 million people and Tucson with greater than 500,000 people.⁴⁰ In addition, Albuquerque, New Mexico is a major US city with more than 545,000

people.⁴¹ Any response from a NG CERFP could take longer than six hours to reach the affected region.

Analysis Summary

The four factors selected in the analysis section were chosen because of their importance in the 2011 GAO CERFP report and noted concerns from directly working in the HRF and CERFP program. Evaluating these factors highlights several significant areas that impact the ability of the HRFs and CERFPs to remain fully trained, funded and aligned across the nation to rapidly respond to a CBRN event, or natural or manmade disaster affecting the US homeland. While none of the factors were deemed to fully degrade the forces from being operationally ready, limiting attention to these factors could consequently decrease the overall readiness of the forces leading to gaps in response capabilities. Upon final analysis of the factors bearing on the problems associated with the current HRF and CERFP force structure, it is evident that continuing improvements can be applied in training, funding, and task force alignment to ensure the NG HRFs and CERFPs remain the right size and the right capability into the future for the American citizens.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite changes in manpower, mission responsibilities and decreasing DoD budgets, the National Guard HRF and CERFP forces remain a viable component to the nation's overall CBRN response capacity. Since the inception of these forces, they have managed to remain fully operational capable as an asset to both state and federal authorities which is evidenced by all of the forces being validated by their respective TAGs. The changes affecting these forces are driven by various factors including decreasing DoD budgets, expanding training requirements, increases in overall force structure, directives from higher authorities, and emerging national

security threats. This research paper examined the question, “Is the current force structure of the NG HRFs and CERFPs properly structured, trained, and aligned to most effectively meet the NG’s homeland defense mission?”

To answer this question, an Evaluation framework was used to focus on several factors currently affecting these forces which included overall force size, force structure, training challenges noted in GAO reports, budgetary concerns from civilian leadership, and observations from experts in the field. A review of the existing literature on military domestic operations, government accountability reports, data gathered from the results of training exercises, and observations from the field were combined to evaluate if the current NG CRE forces remained ready to support incidents in the US homeland. The data suggested that previously identified issues for the HRFs and CERFPs still exist, but the data also indicates that improvements have been achieved over a short amount of time.

This approach identified several areas affecting the forces that still need improvements and it offered insight toward the possible realignment of the forces to meet current national security concerns. The areas within the force structure and training that can be improved upon is the task organization of the CASE element, and adjusting funding to support such a task organization. By increasing CASE training opportunities with the CERFPs, and aligning funding to support additional training days, it will allow these elements to train like they would respond during a real world incident. The regional alignment of the forces across the nation was another area where changes may be implemented to improve response time and regional capacity. Certain areas of the country contain a robust amount of CBRN forces while other areas could be bolstered to align with current national security interests.

In summary, regular evaluations of the NG HRFs and CERFPs by all stakeholders involved in domestic response missions will ensure these forces remain properly structured, trained, aligned and responsive. In addition, on-going evaluations of these forces will also ensure program decision makers have accurate information to seek and align resources for the NG HRFs and CERFPs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper offers three recommendations to ensure a fully operational and capable NG homeland response force is trained, funded, task organized and regionally aligned to respond to any CBRN, natural or manmade disaster in the homeland. The first recommendation is to increase training funding for the CASE and task organize this element from the HRFs to the CERFPs. Second, consider repositioning the regional alignment of the HRFs and CERFPs across the nation to address the current national security interests in the homeland. Third, equalize funding for training days among the HRF and CERFP units so these forces can maximize their joint collective training opportunities.

1. Increase Funding and Task Organize the CASE

The CASE element must collectively train with the CERFP units as they would operate during a real world response operation. This must include properly funding the CASE element from its current level of seven training days, to fourteen training days. If funding remains at its current level both the CASE element and all of the other elements of the CERFPs will miss valuable collective training opportunities. The combination of proper force organization coupled with increased training day funding will strengthen the interoperability of all CRE elements.

2. Re-Align Capabilities within FEMA Regions

Regionally aligning the NG HRFs and CERFPs is a critical component of the response capabilities of these forces. The current force alignment is robust in certain FEMA regions such as those in Region-V and it should be bolstered in other areas of the country to address present US national security concerns. Re-aligning one of the CERFP units from Region-V to either FEMA Regions IX or VI will add additional support to the southwest border of the US. It will also enhance the regional response forces in the southern and southwestern portions of the US that contain sprawling borders, and are prone to natural disasters such as wildfires and earthquakes.

Consideration should also be given to reducing the total number of HRFs across the nation. The HRFs are expensive to man and maintain, and they require significant transportation assets to deploy. It costs approximately \$1.2 million dollars for a HRF to participate in a week long training exercise.⁴² They are a robust C2 element and lack any life-saving capabilities. Their main purpose is to serve as a C2 element for the NG CBRN forces, WMD-CSTs and CERFPs operating at an incident site.⁴³ However, when deployed they are located far enough away from the other elements to avoid possible contamination. Since the HRFs are not required to be in close physical proximity to the life-saving forces they could remain at their home station and still conduct operations. In a period of a decreasing DoD budgets, consideration should be given to reducing the number of HRFs from ten to four. The CERFP life-saving element could be dissolved or transition down from a HRF to a CERFP only. Each of the four HRFs could then be aligned in each of the US time zones and still be able to provide C2 and response capabilities to the CBRN forces during an incident.

3. *Level Funding for HRFs and CERFPs*

Equalizing funding among the HRF and CERFP elements will increase the joint collective training opportunities for all personnel. The current funding model does not fully support collective training opportunities among HRFs and CERFPs. HRFs receive seven days of training funding per year and the CERFPs receive fourteen days of training funding. The number of training days allocated for the HRFs should increase from seven to ten, and the number of days allocated for the CERFPs should decrease from fourteen to ten. This change would not significantly impact the current programmed funding, yet it would permit the HRF to schedule much needed additional training time with their CERFPs.

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